NEW BOOKS.

The Career of a Nevada Magpie.

We find ourselves among the animals in Philip Verrill Mighels's story of "Chatwit, the Man-Talk Bird" (Harper & Brothers). Chatwit was a magpie, black and white, and wiser than a crow. He lived in Nevada. There isa a considerable glossary of the four footed and the winged creatures that were his neighbors. His particular friends were twelve in number and included Bolo the bear, A-til the buzzard, Brifess the coon, Nippe the squirrel and Ruf-ed the horned toad. Of particular enemies he had also twelve, and these included Wo-cri the coyote, Omnus the mountain lion, Fensive the skunk, Knottle the weasel, Jawwid the snake and Klater the beebird. Johnny Stone, a boy out with a musket, caught Chatwit on his first excursion from the mother nest, carried him home and put him in a cage made of a box with slats nailed across.

It has frequently been pointed out of late that it is wrong and misleading to children to tell stories in which animals talk and otherwise behave like human beings. If this was ever pointed out to Æsop, and if he believed it, he must have had a load on his conscience. But we suppose that it is proper enough to have a magpie talk; and, anyway, we could not help feeling grateful when the great gray blowsnake was after Chatwit that the threatened bird should have been able to cry out to Johnny Stone, and to say to him, "Johnny, get your gun, get your gun, get your gun!"

We dare say the magpie should have stayed in the shelter of Johnny Stone's slatted box. Things went ill with him when he was out in the free wild, and when the weasel killed his mate. To be sure, he pecked out the weasel's eye, and, to be sure, the weasel was further bitten by the rattlesnake, his companion in iniquity, who had mistaken him for Chatwit as he tumbled through the leaves, but revenge was small consolation to the bereaved bird. "The beauty of the morning was a mockery to him," the story says, and anybody who pleases may contradict it.

Mr. Crockett's Latest.

S. R. Crockett's story of "Fishers of Men" (D. Appleton & Co.) makes quite an eventful and lively history. The McGhies had their troubles. Mag McGhie was called Mad Mag and seemed to deserve the name, and David McGhie, her husband, felt that his experience in matrimony justified him in putting an end to himself with a horse pistol. He said to his son, little Kid McGhie, as he loaded the pistol, "There is nae ither way for it, Kid, that I can see." The Kid suggested running away, but his father pointed out the uselessnes of this. "She wad catch us up afore ever we got to Carlisle," he said. Moreover, he had promised the minister to cleave to his wife till death should part them. There was but one feasible and honorable method of escape; and the boy rolled down the bank in terror as the horse pistol went off.

This is the opening incident of the story. The immediate urgency of David McGhie's act was the coming out of Mag from jail. Inside the jail she was no more liked than she was out of it. Said the head jailer to her as he set her free: "I hope you'll be such a good subject of her Majesty's that by the grace o' God we will never set eyes on the like of ye again." This was a baseless wish. An hour later she was in the cells again for striking the Kid over the head with a spanner in return for his news about David and the horse pistol. Further on there is a picture showing her trying to put an end to the Kid with a knife.

We shall not tell of all the complications and strong happenings of the story. The reader may be sure that there is plenty to keep his interest engaged and his blood stirring. A conscientious and thorough S. R. Crockett tale.

A Well Told Story of Before the War.

"It all happened half a century ago"—so the story of "The Kentuckian," by James Ball Naylor, commences. The theme is threadbare with much service, the issues, which once roused the enthusiasm of readers, are dead. The tale has been told over and over again of the days before the war. Mr. Naylor's version is given for the most part in the vernacular of a country neighborhood in Ohio where the story of escaping slaves, lawless horse thieves, religious revivals and the homely incidents of rural life is spun out to a finish in a double wedding.

"The Kentuckian" is a fine lad. We have met him hundreds of times before in fiction and always liked him and enjoyed seeing him win out, whether in the books or on the stage. He is good, clean, manly stuff, rides well, shoots straight, fights fair, is not afraid and always captures the fair lady he deserves. It will not do younger people with less experience any harm to read about him again, nor will it do them any special good save to deepen the impression of a period that has now passed into history and has to be learned in the schools like the multiplication table.

"The Kentuckian," is published by the C. M. Clark Publishing Company.

An Interesting Story of Social Life.

There is too much millinery and small talk for a serious book, too much socialism, agnosticism and unitarianism for a light one in Eugenia Brooks Frothingham's long story "The Evasion" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). The incident upon which the plot is based has furnished the "pedal point" for many a romance. One man cheats at cards in a fashionable club. Another man is made to bear the disgrace of it through a long tale, wherein fashionable foibles and modish moral obliquities are investigated and disclosed. From the humble home of a man of science presided over by a New England spinster of austere virtues and unlovable though exalted theories of life a young girl is extracted to take the leading rôle in her modish aunt's handsome establishment. The result is a kind of cross between Ouida's and Mrs. Wharton's social revelations. The girl is a slight slip of a thing with fiery red hair and sapphire blue eyes, who wears her clothes well but has stubborn prejudices against bridge playing and marital infidelities that precipitate the tragedy of the plot. She marries the man who cheated and denied it, and discovers when it is too late that she loves the other man.

However, it is a gentle tragedy and not without hope. No one resorts to suicide and the last chapter leaves the guilty husband ill, with an incurable hurt received in an automobile accident while eloping with another woman. The automobile is a great invention in the solution of romantic problems. It has quite replaced the ancient duello and is more certain and swift in its methods. One feels sure that there will be a handsome funeral and a "quiet wedding" in the near future wherein the lovers will be reunited.

The incident upon which the story is founded seems too slight for the weight of events developed from it—the ruin of an innocent man in every ambition and undertaking of a life spent in altruistic but unavailing efforts to aid his fellow men. The story is much cluttered and obstructed with unessential details, but a great many true if cynical sayings are to be found in the text if one has time and patience to devote to the reading of a long tale which has neither the charm of novelty nor the merit of literary excellence to commend it to favor.

"Kenelm's Desire."

Kenelm was an Alaska Indian, the son of a noble tribe, adopted and educated by a Scotchman in British Columbia. His "Desire" is a lady described in the first paragraph as "impulsive, impressional, impassioned, rebellious, complaisant, conventional, convention-scorning" and "altruistic." It is not necessary to read further to see that the game is to end in a wedding and that there will be stirring times in bringing it about, since Desire had a German mother and a musical temperament and Kenelin was bound to be "taciturn" and "stolid" and "silent" after the manner of his race.

The scene is laid in San Francisco and in British Columbia, where a great deal of free out of door life, frankly elemental emotion, thrilling adventures in canoeing and picturesque Indian traditions is jumbled together without great regard for the probabilities or plausibilities of actual happenings. The local color is splashed on in chaotic impressionist style with little art and much crudeness. The great climax, when Kenelm performed the circus trick of undressing himself from his laced wet shoes to his collar while clinging by one hand to the face of the cliff above a whirlpool, is marred by the fact that he had no audience. We have only his word for it. After that, to rise to being a barrister and a member of the Provincial Parliament, not to mention marrying Desire, were simple feats. The story of "Kenelm's Desire" is written by Hughes Cornell and published by Little, Brown & Co.

"The Spur"—A Novel of the Kipling School.

Any writer who blazes out a new trail through the wilds of an unknown country where men live fearlessly and frankly, with emotions undressed by conventionality and passions naked and natural and unashamed—is called another Kipling. Such a writer is G. B. Lancaster, the author of "The Spur," who hides a mysterious personality under a noncommittal name. Whether the author is man or woman is unknown, but he (or she) writes as a strong man should—with grip and pathos and force.

But notwithstanding a wealth of imgaery, a terseness of phrase, a picturesqueness of vocabulary that entitle him to a place in the Kipling school, he lacks the subtle humor that distinguished the early Kipling man ner, and he has not yet learned to produce the picture with the few sure, swift lines of the master. The book is glowing in color, pungent in flavor, vibrant with life and uncommon in style and spirit.

The scene shifts rapidly from Australia to New Zealand and Samoa. The dialects are many and sometimes difficult to follow. The characters are well defined and convincing, even down to "Mr. Tubbs," the sympathetic fox terrier, to whom much philosophy and many secrets are confided. The story is the tale of the bondage of Kin Severne.

Kin was a sheep shearer with the "seeing eye" and the knack of telling what he saw graphically, if not always grammatically, coupled with the great desire to talk to the world and make it listen, which comes with the birthright of genius. For the sake of his chance, for the education he needed, the opportunity he craved, he sold himself and the work of his brain to a literary Shylock who demanded his pound of flesh just when life was fairest. So long as Kin's only love was a "bit of paper and the stub end of a pencil and—what I can make out of 'em," the fetters of bondage were lightly worn in spite of their torture. But when the woman came, the woman of whom Kin said, "I can't understand, oh, God. My work is dearer than my soul, and she is dearer than both," then Kin confided to Mr. Tulk: "It's going to be painful, I think. I paid away all I had for the love of my work. And my work is no more to me now than a dead rabbit is to you, Mr. Tulk. Do you think that it doesn't hurt like ——? I tell you, she's just a slip of a girl, an' I don't know whether I want to go down on my face and kiss the hem of her petticoat or whether I will kiss her mouth and make her kiss me back."

The strength of the story lie in the inevitableness of its tragedy—a tragedy bravely met with the silent heroism of the strong man. The compelling interest in the narrative is the unusual and unique style in which it is written rather than in the sequence of events. Many passages like the following have the Kipling hallmark: "In from Rockhampton—the which is the City of Sin, Sweat and Sorrow—stands a bush township where Kin had once lain two months, mad and half blind with sandy blight—and he put it on paper for the hate and laughter of men. It was all there; the hot brazen evenings, when men and women and half clad children flocked the streets and the crowded bars reeked with kerosene smoke and stale beer * * * It was the bitterest, nakedest tragedy under God's sun. But it was good copy. Kin set it all down, purring in content and unashamed." "The Spur" takes its name from a particularly ghastly device of the Hindoos for fighting the demons that come with sleep in the night time. "It has the recommendation of being a very simple method, for it is just a spear or a long rowed

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